



AMATEURADIO

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and Amateur Satellite Services

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MARS — The Shortest Route Home

"The MARS station is now open for phone patches to the states." This familiar announcement over the public address system onboard the Norfolk based USS Saipan, is usually a welcome sound to Saipan sailors. The announcement means it's time to talk to the family and friends, but how is this done from the middle of the Atlantic Ocean?

The Military Affiliate Radio Service, or just MARS, is an organization operated by FCC licensed ham radio operators and volunteers aboard U.S. Navy vessels, at other military installations and in their homes across the United States. An operator on board a deployed navy ship can contact a ham operator and in turn the ham operator phones the local telephone operator who makes the connection with the caller's wife, parents or friend. The MARS operators provide this service as a hobby with the only charge being that of a collect local or long distance phone call from the shore-MARS station.

Recently, while the Saipan was in Port Rota, Spain making preparations to return to the United States after a six month deployment, a new crewmember checked on board. Harry C. "Hap" Hansen of Luthersville, Maryland made the trip to Spain to join the Saipan for a ride back to the States. "Hap" was invited to ride the Saipan by a "radio friend", Rick Grotkier. Grotkier, one of Saipan's MARS operators, came in contact with "Hap" over the "air waves" in August 1979 while the Saipan was off the



Hap Hansen uses the Saipan's MARS station to talk with a stateside MARS operator as he reverses his normal role.

coast of Nicaragua for contingency operations during that country's escalating civil war.

"Hap" started with MARS doing regional and local

(Continued next page)

The Sailor's Lifeline

By Stu Watson
Medford, OR Tribune

PHOENIX, OR — He doesn't fancy himself a latter-day Walter Winchell. When Roland Nuckols sits down to his radio console after a long day of fitting pipes and fixing leaky faucets, he's strictly an amateur.

That is, he gets no pay. What he does, though, is anything but unprofessional. Like Winchell, who addressed "Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea," Nuckols aims his voice every night at assorted islands of humanity bobbing in the ocean's vastness. But his isn't a rhetorical greeting. When Nuckols speaks, he establishes a vital link with sailors who have no other contact with the real world.

"Commercial vehicles have the facilities to get themselves out of trouble," Nuckols says. "Most small boats don't have commercial two-way radio except for VHF, which is relatively short-range."

To talk radio with a "ham" like Nuckols is to enter a maze of lingo about wave lengths and frequencies and power and such. It's enough to say that Nuckols, a dedicated ham for 15 years, has been a part of the informal Pacific Maritime Network since 1979. The network is a group of individuals ringing the Pacific Ocean and working to keep it safe for the small navigator. It is but one of several such networks stretching around the globe.

"It's very loosely structured and it works like a dream," Nuckols says.

Nuckols says the network consists of about six regulars. Others pop in and out of the network. On any given night, each may have contact with just a few boats, or as many as 15. The number varies from night to night, because the network members make contact only with those boats in transit.

One night, Nuckols recalls, he got a call from a 50-foot, twin-screw boat in the ocean off New Zealand. Its

rudders were locked in place. Over the course of two days, Nuckols and other hams worked together to arrange for a tugboat to rescue the boat.

On another occasion, over a period of several months, Nuckols tracked a sailor named Mike Lintner on his voyage from Papeete to the West Coast. Along the way, Lintner lost his main sail, had to use a solar charger to keep minimal power in his batteries for radio contact, and collided with a freighter off the California coast.

Lintner now is sailing his boat on Nevada's Lake Mead, but part of that tattered main sail is hanging on Nuckols's wall, a token of appreciation for his radio contact.

Nuckols has 25 log books of such contacts he's made over the years. Some have been with valley residents after they set sail to distant horizons. He kept radio contact with Bob and Phyllis Ross of Medford, OR, for instance, during their voyage to Australia.

Though it sometimes serves that purpose, regular ham radio contact isn't intended to be an emergency service.

"We're trying to stop it before it ever gets there" Nuckols says of any situation that might escalate into a small but personal disaster.

He recalls one incident that illustrates what he means. He wasn't personally involved in it, but learned of it through his airwave contacts.

An Italian man, his wife, and another man were sailing about three days from Hawaii when the woman came down with a kidney infection. Her husband spoke broken English, but managed to express the gravity of the situation when he called the network for help.

The contact in Hawaii got through to a Coast Guard physician and a woman who spoke Italian. He arranged a phone patch through his radio so the physician and translator could learn what was in the boat's medicine chest and prescribe treatment that prevented a helicopter evacuation.

"It's a very satisfying thing," Nuckols says, "when you're maintaining a thing that provides help to somebody that needs help and needs it badly."

One might suspect that Nuckols harbors some regret that he didn't get into radio instead of plumbing. He doesn't. His father was a plumber, and the wages looked "mighty good" to a young man seeking work during the Depression.

"You do what you have to do," Nuckols says.

So he tunes pipes for money during the day. And at night, he tunes his radio for the storm-tossed souls who think his voice is sweeter than music.

(Reprinted with permission from The Medford, OR Tribune)

MARS

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nets but enjoyed the "float program" much more. The "float program" deals with long distance message traffic from ship to shore. "Hap's" hobby has been most beneficial to the Saipan as he has processed over 3,000 calls for Saipan crewmembers alone. Communications with family and friends is a basic need for all. A deployment of half a year makes that need realized all the more. A lot of "Hap's" time is devoted to the "float program", as well as to his full time job back in Luthersville, but "Hap" says, "the float program makes it all worthwhile."

Saipan sailors made "Hap" very welcome aboard and enjoyed his visit as much as he did. But this is far from "Hap's" first time at sea. A member of the merchant marine between 1941 and 1947, "Hap" has a few sea stories of his own. While most Saipan sailors were looking forward to getting back to the States and home to families and friends, "Hap" saw it as the end of a unique experience, and a most enjoyable one at that.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE AMATEUR RADIO SERVICE? Contact Perry Williams, ARRL's Washington Area Coordinator, and arrange for a personal visit by calling (202) 296-9107.



Roland Nuckols talks with a small boat off the coast of Hawaii. Conversation is mostly about the great weather in the "Islands," because there is no emergency — today.

Along League Lines Continued from page 4

quencies. Obviously, the frequencies referred to in these articles are outside these bands.

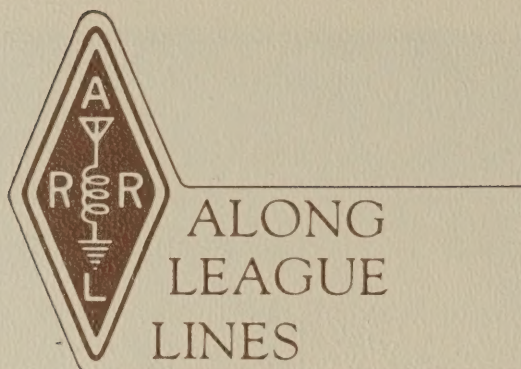
Under the provisions of the Communications Act of 1934, Section 605, the activities mentioned are illegal. Our Service is one of the most law abiding services under the jurisdiction of the FCC. Activities implied by the *POST* and *TIMES* as being common are, in fact, completely out of character for us.

It may very well be that some of the individuals involved are Amateur Radio Operators. The identification of these individuals as "ham operators" adds nothing of substance to the stories. It is comparable to newspaper articles that identify a rapist as a Catholic, Jew or Negro. An individual is guilty of a crime — not the whole group!

My friend who speaks "legalese" tells me that newspapers printing the transcripts of Presidential conversa-

tions can probably successfully defend their actions with legal technicalities. On the other hand, there does not seem to be any strong defense for an individual who eavesdrops and divulges the contents of the transmissions. The law is rather clear in this regard.

It is rather complicated, at times, to explain who we are; but it is often even more difficult to explain who we are not. Amateur Radio operators are not CBers. Amateur Radio operators are not short-wave listeners snooping on government officials. Amateur Radio operators are not "scanner buffs" drooling over the police and ambulance chatter on the public service bands. Amateur Radio operators are electronic hobbyists building equipment, talking to each other and willing to serve their communities in times of need. No wonder I get that sinking feeling when I pick up a newspaper and see a headline about "Hams Listen in . . ."



Around 30,000 feet over the coast of southern New Jersey, I had a sinking feeling. The plane was not in trouble; but I thought Amateur Radio might be. I had picked up a copy of *THE WASHINGTON POST* (June 17) while waiting for departure at National.

A story bemoaning the confusion between former Secretary of State Haig and the UN delegation indicated Haig intended to use some ham radio operator in the Washington area to send his instructions to New York. Ridiculous as this idea is, I sat staring out the window wondering how to counter this piece of undeserved glory. Then I noticed Art Buchwald's name at the top. Usually I'm not that gullible, but . . .

In the weeks preceding this *THE WASHINGTON POST* and *THE NEW YORK TIMES* had run articles attributing illegal activities to "Amateur Radio Buffs," "Ham Radio operator" and "ham operator." Both articles dealt with people with radio **receiving** equipment who make a

habit of eavesdropping on the communications of the President. These articles grew out of the furor arising when Jack Anderson published the transcript of a "telephone" conversation between President Reagan and former Secretary Haig.

Syndicated columnist Jody Powell reminisced about his White House days and how the government officials frequently played pranks on the press by divulging false information over radio circuits. This column appeared in the *POST* Thursday, April 29 under the title "How The Networks Eavesdrop on the White House." The *TIMES* picked up on this theme and ran an article entitled "Radio Buffs Tune In On Air Force One" June 10 featuring Stewart Stogel of Mount Vernon, NY. In both cases these snooping activities were attributed to ham operators. What are the facts?

The activities described in the *TIMES* and the *POST* have nothing to do with Amateur Radio. "Ham operator" is a generally accepted nickname for Amateur Radio operators. Amateur Radio operators are tested and licensed by the FCC for **two-way communications**. Our activities are limited to very specific bands of frequencies assigned internationally to the Amateur Radio Service. As a result, most of the equipment designed for the Amateur Radio market covers only these bands of fre-

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